

Master File  
DO NOT REMOVE

# YOUiversity Avenue



DIVISION OF PLANNING  
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
CITY OF SAINT PAUL  
421 WABASHA STREET  
SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA, 55102  
TELEPHONE: 612-298-4151

## UNIVERSITY AVENUE PLAN DRAFT

### CONTENTS:

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.....	1
HISTORY.....	2
UNIVERSITY AVENUE TODAY.....	4
UNIVERSITY AVENUE IMAGE.....	6
PROPOSALS.....	8
Transportation.....	8
Land Use.....	10
Urban Design.....	12
Economic Development.....	16
STAGE ONE ACTION PLAN.....	17
APPENDIX.....	19
Transportation Issue Paper.....	20
Land Use Issue Paper.....	26
Urban Design Issue Paper.....	30
Economic Development Issue Paper.....	36
CREDITS.....	39

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

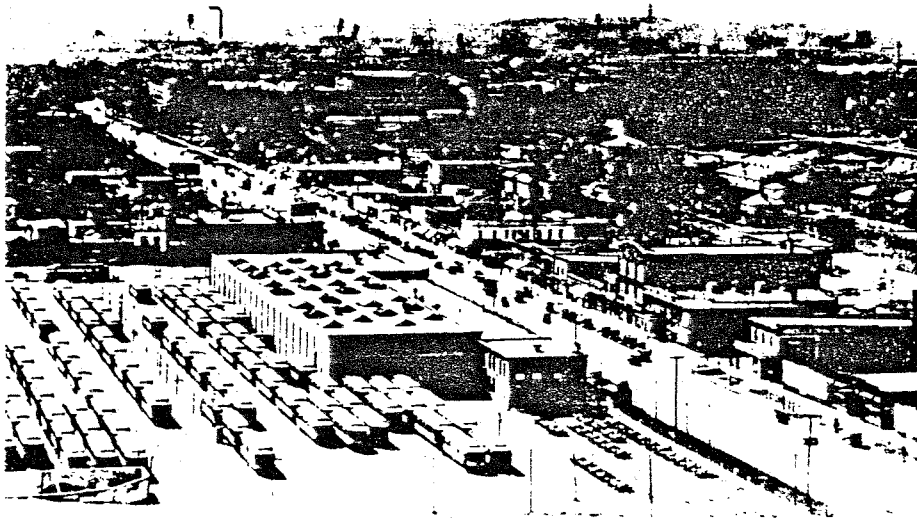
University Avenue, from Cleveland Avenue to Lexington Avenue, is the dividing line between District 11 and District 13. Because each district only includes one side of the street, neither district attempted to develop a comprehensive University Avenue commercial component in their respective district plans.

Therefore, an "overlay" district, defined by Thomas Avenue to the north, I-94 to the south, Cleveland Avenue to the west, and Lexington Avenue to the east, was created to fill this planning void within the Comprehensive Plan. The University Avenue Plan is the product of cooperation between District 11, District 13, and the business community in producing a guide for future redevelopment and growth in the Midway commercial area.

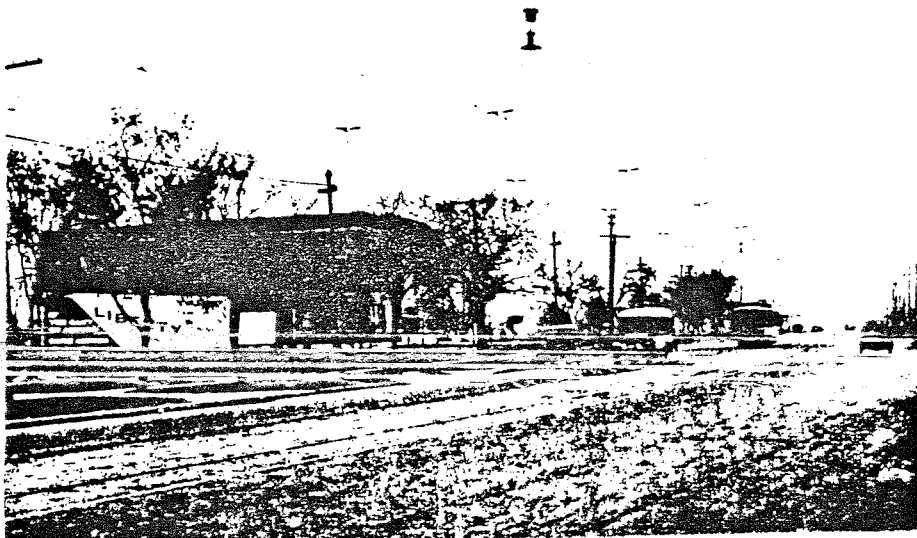
# History

The late 1800s was a period of economic growth for St. Paul with the city expanding from its original steamboat landing near the downtown to the area above the bluffs and westward toward Minneapolis. One of the major routes between the two growing cities was University Avenue.

Originally named in 1874, University Avenue connected the University of Minnesota and Hamline University. However, in 1880, the development of the Minnesota Transfer Yards forced the Avenue to be relocated to its present route.

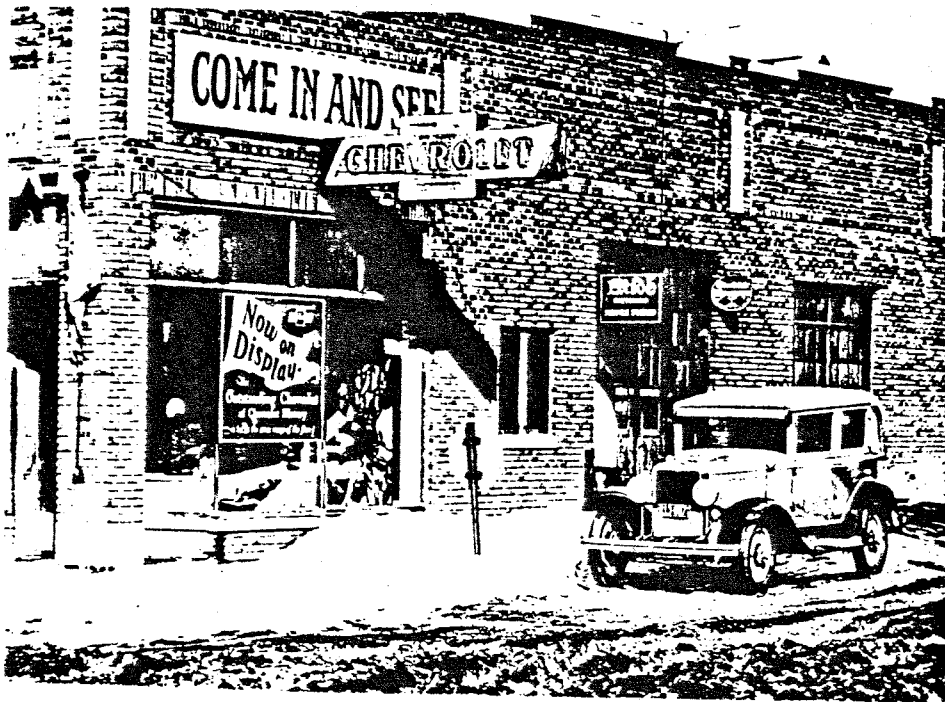


During its early years, University Avenue was primarily residential, providing housing for a growing labor force. In 1890 the electric trolley line, the "inter-city route", was built on University, encouraging further residential, commercial, and industrial growth.





The early 1900s saw the development of small commercial areas which served the adjacent community along the Avenue. However, the growing popularity of the automobile began to change the Avenue's orientation. By the late 1920s, the Avenue had become the location for many automobile dealers and businesses offering auto parts and services.



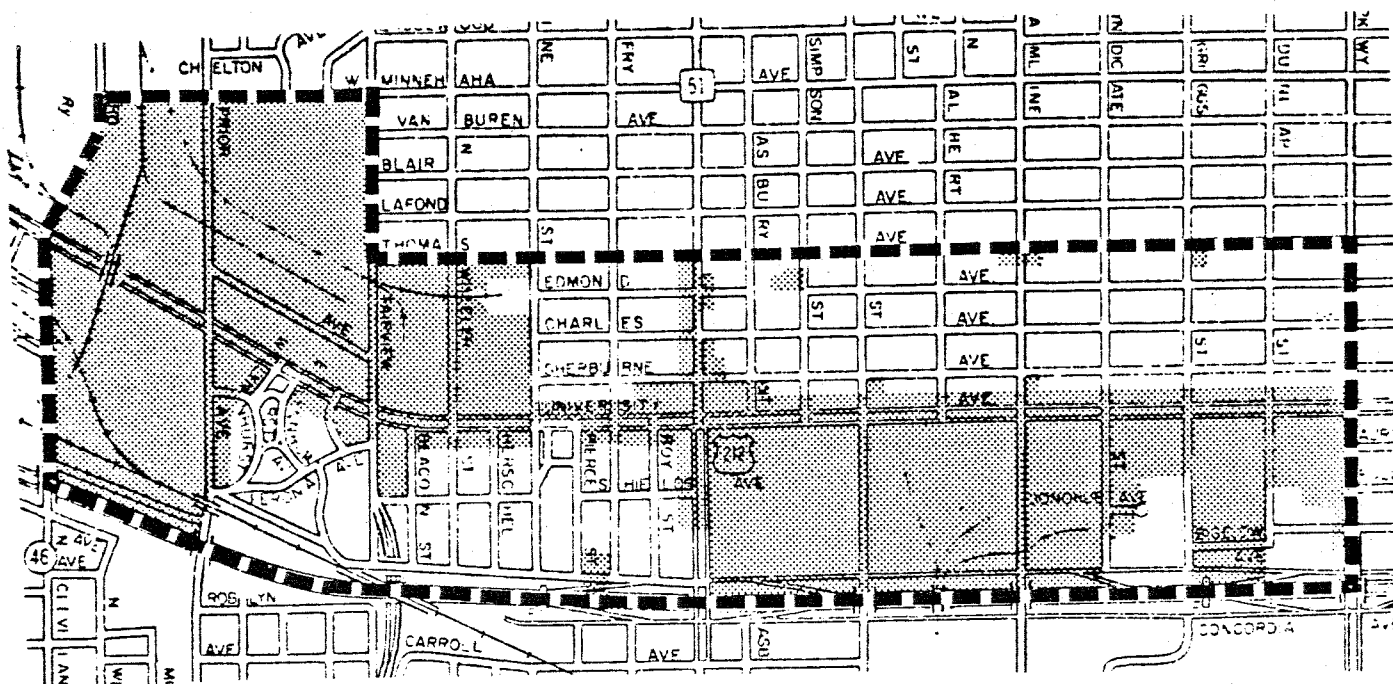
The Avenue's transformation continued through the 1950s. As automobile circulation increased, community and neighborhood services decreased, signage and architecture became automobile oriented, and the Avenue's businesses became increasingly reliant upon a metropolitan market.

The 1960s saw two major adverse impacts on University Avenue. The competitive suburban commercial centers had reduced the Avenue's importance as a metropolitan commercial service center and the completion of I-94 in 1968 had reduced traffic volumes along the Avenue by approximately 33%. The following decade saw the Midway area continue to decrease in importance as a St. Paul commercial center.

However, University Avenue is once again experiencing a commercial resurgence with many new and expanded services for both the adjacent neighborhoods and the broader metropolitan area. University Avenue once more shows signs of being a dynamic force in the future commercial growth of St. Paul.



The study area contains approximately 2,670,000 square feet of commercial building space. Of this square footage, 38% is used for retail sales, 13% for office use, 42% for industrial, warehouse, transportation uses, and 3% for institutional use. The remaining 4% is vacant. Of the existing retail and office uses approximately 7% is vacant. The percentage of retail sales space will increase dramatically with the opening of the Target Store at University and Hamline in 1982.



STUDY AREA BOUNDARY

AREA ZONED NON-RESIDENTIAL



# University Avenue Image

The University Avenue image is the result of grouping industrial, commercial, and residential uses into a relatively concentrated area. Conflicts between pedestrian and automobile, visual clutter, and vacant and unkept land creates a disjointed perception of the Avenue.



## Holes in street facade

### Vacant Land and Deteriorating Image

- The University Avenue Study area has a large amount of vacant and underutilized land and building space. Several sections of vacant land along the Avenue have been devoted to auto storage.
- Iris Park has been allowed to deteriorate adding to the unkept image of the Avenue.
- Inadequate buffering between commercial and residential uses has created conflicts.

### Automobile Volumes and Parking

- High vehicular traffic volumes have discouraged pedestrian use of the Avenue.
- A lack of parking adjacent to the I-94 express pick-up has led bus commuters to park on residential streets in a six block area. Pressure for commercial parking has resulted in on-street residential parking being used by adjacent businesses.
- There is a lack of sufficient off-street parking for businesses along the north side of University Avenue.

### Lack of Landscaping and Urban Design Amenities

- There is an overabundance of paving and too little landscaping along the Avenue making it a vehicular place, not a people place.
- Excessive and overlapping signs have created a cluttered visual effect.
- In many cases the rear views of commercial property are unsightly to the adjacent residential areas.
- The places provided for pedestrians are not separated from the transportation corridor and the person on foot is lost on an overwhelming vehicular landscape.





Garrish & wordy signage

- . The bus shelters along the Avenue are not clearly visible or attractive.
- . The Avenue lacks positive identifying elements such as parks and maintained landmarks.

#### Lack of Commercial Direction

- . Competition from shopping centers outside the study area has drawn customers away from local businesses.
- . In some business areas, there is a poor mixture of commercial uses with interspersed industrial uses.
- . There is a lack of family entertainment, such as movie theaters in the Midway area.

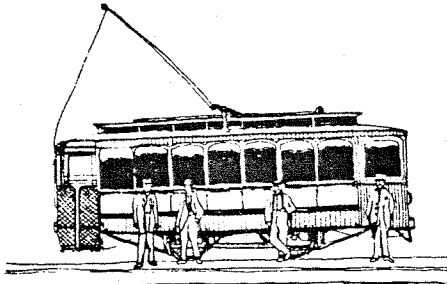
# Proposals

## Transportation

To facilitate the ease and safety of pedestrian and vehicular movement within the study area, the University Avenue Task Force has identified the following transportation recommendations.

The Task Force has considered the importance of mass transit within the corridor and feels that it is essential in meeting the future transportation needs of the area. Realizing the importance of efficiency and convenience in mass transit systems, the University Avenue Task Force recommends that the MTC:

1. Where possible move all bus stops to far side of the intersection.
2. Study the use of opticomms to provide buses with priority of movement over private traffic.
3. Create an "alternate stop" system along the 16A route integrated with environmentally conditioned bus shelters.
4. Lengthen the available bus stop space on the southeast corner of Snelling and University to accommodate two standing buses by moving the existing taxi stand east along the Avenue.
5. Provide attractive bus shelters.
6. Work with developers of new construction to integrate bus shelters into new structures.
7. Relocate the MTC garage at Snelling and St. Anthony to a more appropriate location and use a portion of the vacated site for the parking component of a "Park and Ride" and/or the "I-94 express" pick-up.



8. Continue the study of light rail transit and other alternatives to meeting the mass transportation needs along University Avenue.

It is understood that the Department of Public Works is responsible for the traffic engineering of both pedestrian and vehicular systems within the public right-of-way. In consideration of pedestrian, cyclist, and driver safety, the University Avenue Task Force recommends that the Department of Public Works:

9. Provide formal bike routes within the University Avenue Study Area corridor.
10. Re-orient priorities to make Snelling and University more compatible with pedestrian traffic.

11. Examine pedestrian crossing problems at the intersection of Snelling and University. Possible remedies might include:
  - a. Increasing time for walk signal.
  - b. Installing push buttons for walk signals.
  - c. Re-engineering the pedestrian crossing to the appropriate medians on left turn arrows.
  - d. Relocate walk signals so that they are visible to pedestrians.
12. Evaluate the right-of-way along University Avenue to determine if expansion and/or visual buffering of the sidewalks from the street traffic are viable actions.
13. Examine the new traffic patterns at the Hamline and University intersection, as they develop, to determine the effectiveness of present engineering systems.
14. Work with the Montgomery Ward designers to re-engineer the entrance into Ward's parking lot from Pascal Street.
15. Work with representatives of the Midway National Bank, the Midway Center, and the MTC to re-engineer the drive-in bank and Midway Center parking access and egress as well as provide adequate space for two standing buses and a taxi stand at the southeast corner of Snelling and University.

The transportation issues affecting the University Avenue area result from the Avenue being a focus of the regional transportation network. Consequently, the Snelling/University intersection is the most heavily trafficked at-grade intersection within the Twin Cities. The high traffic volume led to the air quality problems recorded at the intersection this past year. Therefore, the University Avenue Task Force encourages the reduction of private vehicular trips through the intersection and supports in concept:

16. Construction of Kasota Avenue between Highway 280 and Lexington Avenue.
17. Extension of Prior Avenue from Transfer Road to Kasota and onto Como Avenue.

A survey of area businesses revealed an overwhelming felt need for additional parking in the area. In response to this expressed need, the University Avenue Task Force recommends that the City of St. Paul, in coordination with the Hamline-Midway Local Development Corporation and commercial owners:

18. Develop small parking areas and a supporting shuttle system along the Avenue on commercially zoned land, with funding shared by the commercial owners benefiting from its use.
19. Study the feasibility of redesigning the right-of-way on Asbury Street between University Avenue and the alley between University and Sherburne to provide additional parking and landscape buffering between the commercial and residential uses.

## Land Use

The land uses within the University Avenue Study area vary greatly from single family homes to light industries. It is the premise of this study that all uses can continue to develop and remain healthy, despite their general incompatibilities. The emphasis of the University Avenue Land Use Recommendations then, are to cluster uses and provide buffers between different uses. The following measures have been recommended with these principles and their consistent application in mind.

The Midway Center's designation as a "Major Retail Center" indicated the dominance of commercial uses along University between Lexington and Cleveland Avenues. In an effort to continue clustering within this area, the Task Force recommends that the Hamline-Midway LDC:

20. Encourage the reuse of deteriorating industrial space into commercial and office space as it becomes available.
21. Encourage the elimination of industrial uses along University Avenue within the study area and their replacement with commercial/office uses.
22. Identify industrial polluters and with the aid of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency rectify situations.
23. Implement a land use/design study for the area defined by Minnehaha, University, Prior and Fairview.
24. Encourage commercial redevelopment of the lot on the northeast corner of University and Hamline, presently used as a car lot.
25. Encourage the development of retail and office use in the warehouse at 1159 University Avenue.
26. Promote the relocation of the MTC garage at Snelling and St. Anthony for a Planned Development of parking, commercial, office, and residential mixed use.
27. Encourage a residentially compatible reuse at the Adhouse Corporation Building at 1275 University Avenue.
28. Encourage retail with adequate rear parking on the vacant lot west of 1831 University Avenue.
29. Work toward the reduction of car storage out-lots within the study area, to make the vacant lots available for better uses.
30. Promote the development of housing and/or office use in the area located north of the proposed park at 1247 St. Anthony.
31. Promote a commercial reuse of the vacant land northwest of the Hamline-St. Anthony intersection by encouraging a down-zoning of the land from I-1 to B-3.
32. Encourage the containment of commercial uses within the bounds of commercially zoned land.

The needs for park space and recreational facilities are common to both residential and commercial communities. The maintenance and development of additional green space is a common goal to all participants of this study. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that the City of St. Paul's Department of Parks and Recreation:

33. Upgrade Iris Park with benches, picnic tables, landscaping and pedestrian walkway improvements.
34. Preserve and improve Dickerman Park.
35. Acquire a portion of the parking lot at 1247 St. Anthony for a park and/or recreation space with a connection into the Target-Roadway greenway.
36. Develop a master plan for the land north of St. Anthony from Griggs to Snelling which would include a pedestrian walkway and bikeway.

In addition to the above recreational uses the Task Force recommends that the Hamline-Midway LDC:

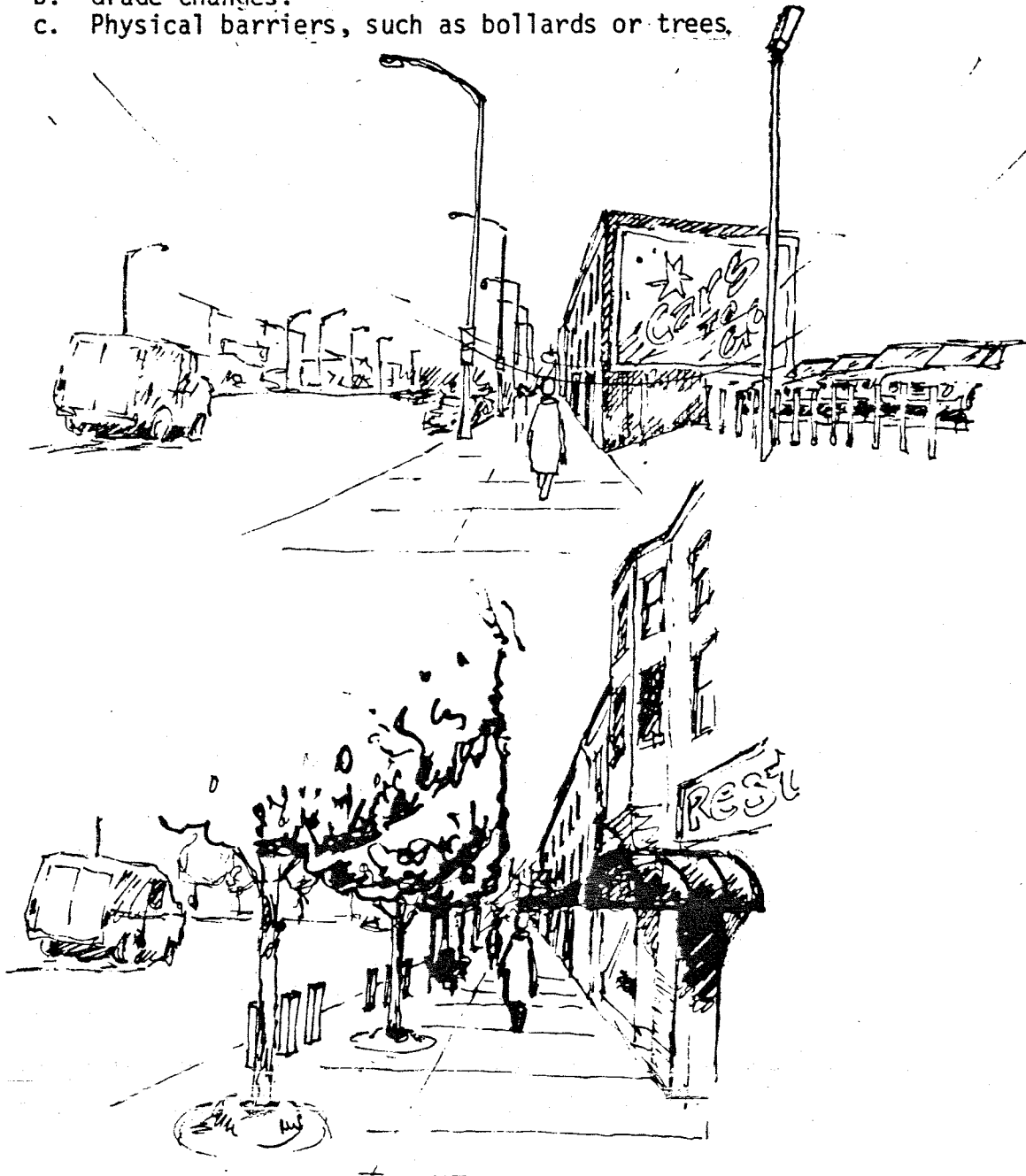
37. Promote the establishment of family entertainment within the area, which should include a motion picture theater and roller skating rink.



## Urban Design

In order to improve the streetscape along University Avenue, the Task Force recommends that the Hamline-Midway LDC:

38. Encourage the creation of pedestrian corridors visually and/or physically separated from traffic. This might be accomplished through:
- a. New alignments.
  - b. Grade changes.
  - c. Physical barriers, such as bollards or trees.



Pedestrian concourse buffered from street.

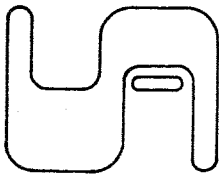
39. Encourage the visual buffering of existing parking lots with architectural or land form screening and the introduction of proper entrance/exit signage.
40. Encourage the development of a pedestrian walkway system, possibly linked to mass transit, which would connect the Midway Center, Wards, Target-Roadway block, and future development in the area.
41. Encourage better pedestrian access across major parking lots and provide a protected environment in and around the Midway shopping area by enclosing promenade.
42. Support the elimination of on-street parking and the creation and use of off-street parking so that sidewalks along University Avenue can be expanded.
43. Encourage the placement of new off-street parking behind and to the side of businesses rather than in the front.
44. Encourage the addition of handicapped access ramps or grading to sidewalks at the following intersections: University Avenue and Pierce, Aldine, Wheeler, Beacon, Fairview, Prior and Cleveland.
45. Work with the area businesses and the City of St. Paul to develop a funding procedure to pay for the scale elements...pedestrian amenities at key points along University Avenue. These elements might include: canopies, awnings, overhangs, arcades, plantings, benches, bollard, kiosks, etc.
46. Encourage the common use of commercial space, such as open courts and malls.
47. Encourage the incorporation of bus shelters into new and existing buildings.

Contributing to the basic unattractiveness of University Avenue is the visual noise created by signage. In an effort to provide a more pleasant visual image and project more effective advertising, the University Avenue Task Force recommends that the Hamoine-Midway LDC:

48. Promote the use of signage that is located and designed in a manner sympathetic to the building's architecture, while being reflective of and consistent with the design intent for University Avenue.
49. Encourage the initiation of sign control codes which would:
  - a. Limit sign size and conform to the latest city sign ordinance.
  - b. Encourage removal of deteriorating signs and unused roof top signs.
  - c. Promote the use of clear, concise graphics.
50. Promote a coordinated system of building address numbers.
51. Encourage the removal of billboards, roof signs, and unused chimney supports.
52. Removals should include:
  - a. Offensive billboards at Warner's Hardware.
  - b. Vertical sign column on Midway National Bank.
53. Urge businesses, especially car dealers, to limit window advertising.
54. Examine the University Avenue Commercial Revitalization Program Implementation Guide and retain the guide as a reference on signage and design.

The character of University Avenue is clearly oriented toward the automobile and motorist. The University Avenue Task Force feels, however, that the establishment of community identities would benefit the Avenue's urban design. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that the Hamline-Midway LDC:

55. Encourage the creation of special character images at major nodes along University Avenue, so that they are highly visible to pedestrians and motorists. Major nodes should include the intersections of University Avenue and Lexington Parkway, Hamline Avenue, Snelling Avenue, Fairview Avenue, and Cleveland Avenue.
56. Encourage the implementation of a design program that both adheres to an overall design scheme and responds to local characteristics along University Avenue. If approved, the design program should consider the following elements:
  - a. Establishing a color scheme for the Avenue and applying it consistently to all public lights, traffic and sign fixtures. Pedestrian amenities, such as benches and trash receptacles should also be included.
  - b. Providing a unique paving scheme which would be applied consistently along the Avenue.
  - c. Painting murals on available sites to promote community identities. Possible sites include the Gold Medal, Ford Truck, Midway Medical, Midway College, and Snelling Apartment buildings.
  - d. Work with COMPAS in coordinating graphic efforts along University Avenue.



57. Promote the creation and use of a University Avenue logo.
58. Encourage design changes at the University and Lexington intersection to create a more pleasing visual image. This could be accomplished by:
  - a. Screening in all parking areas.
  - b. Encouraging retail development on the corners.
  - c. Developing stronger visual entrances to the shopping center.
  - d. Introducing landscaped plantings and planters.
  - e. Installing special lighting.
  - f. Installing accent paving at corners.
  - g. Managing of all public and private signage and signals.
  - h. Introducing benches and designed bus shelters.
59. Encourage the clustering of fast food and similar use businesses along the Avenue for both convenience and to maintain visual continuity.

Green space provides visual relief for both pedestrians and the motorists. The Task Force recognizes the importance of this aspect and, therefore, recommends that the Hamline-Midway LDC:

60. Preserve and encourage the upgrading of all existing green space:
  - a. Plant the median on University Avenue with trees and bushes.
  - b. Plant trees and bushes along sidewalks and greenways along University Avenue.
  - c. Landscape open space used for park or recreation use to provide a visual or noise barrier.
  - d. Introduce a greater proportion of green space to the Midway Center parking area. Additions should include: round shade trees, a hedge buffer around the lot and the creation of boulevards.
  - e. Plant the slope from the parking area to the sidewalk in front of the Ward's store.
  - f. Preserve oak trees at the Midway Hospital.
61. Encourage the use of more open space along the Avenue for accommodating the needs of lunch hour users and local residents:
  - a. Redesign Iris Park to include lighting, benches, wading pool, tot lot, picnic tables, flowers, sculptures, etc.

The long term value of any improvements or changes, however, is dependent on their maintenance. Therefore, in an attempt to ensure any investments made in the University Avenue area, the Task Force recommends that the Hamline-Midway LDC:

62. Work with the businesses and residents to develop a system to clean and maintain the public areas along the Avenue.
63. Work with the Department of Public Works to coordinate a more effective system of city services and maintenance:
  - a. Provide larger trash containers and/or more frequent trash pick-up.
64. Work with litter producing businesses to establish responsibility for the pick-up of litter in their areas.
65. Work with area businesses to establish a sense of commercial neighborhood and pride. Activities should include:
  - a. Maintaining store fronts.
  - b. Washing windows.
  - c. Sweeping and/or washing off sidewalks.
  - d. Cleaning of adjacent bus shelters.

Essential to the redesign of University Avenue is the revitalization of deteriorating buildings and building elements. The Task Force, therefore, recommends that the Hamline-Midway LDC:

66. Encourage the cleaning and upgrading of commercial facades for both commercial and residential areas. In situations where repairs are neither possible or feasible, the building should be removed and replaced with another.
67. Encourage area businesses to retain and rehabilitate significant historical and architectural structures so as to preserve their character, both inside and out. Structures include:
  - a. The Dimensional Display Building at 1222 University Avenue.
68. Promote the use of small low interest loans by area businesses.

### Economic Development

In order to encourage development of commercial opportunities on commercially zoned land, the University Avenue Task Force recommends that the Hamline-Midway LDC:

69. Implement the commercial land use, transportation, and urban design proposals as outlined in this plan.
70. Work to cluster shopping facilities at selected intersections along the commercial strip.
71. Coordinate urban design improvements enhancing University Avenue's public image in order to attract appropriate development.
72. Work with the neighborhood community councils and the area businesses for better communication and inter-dependence awareness.



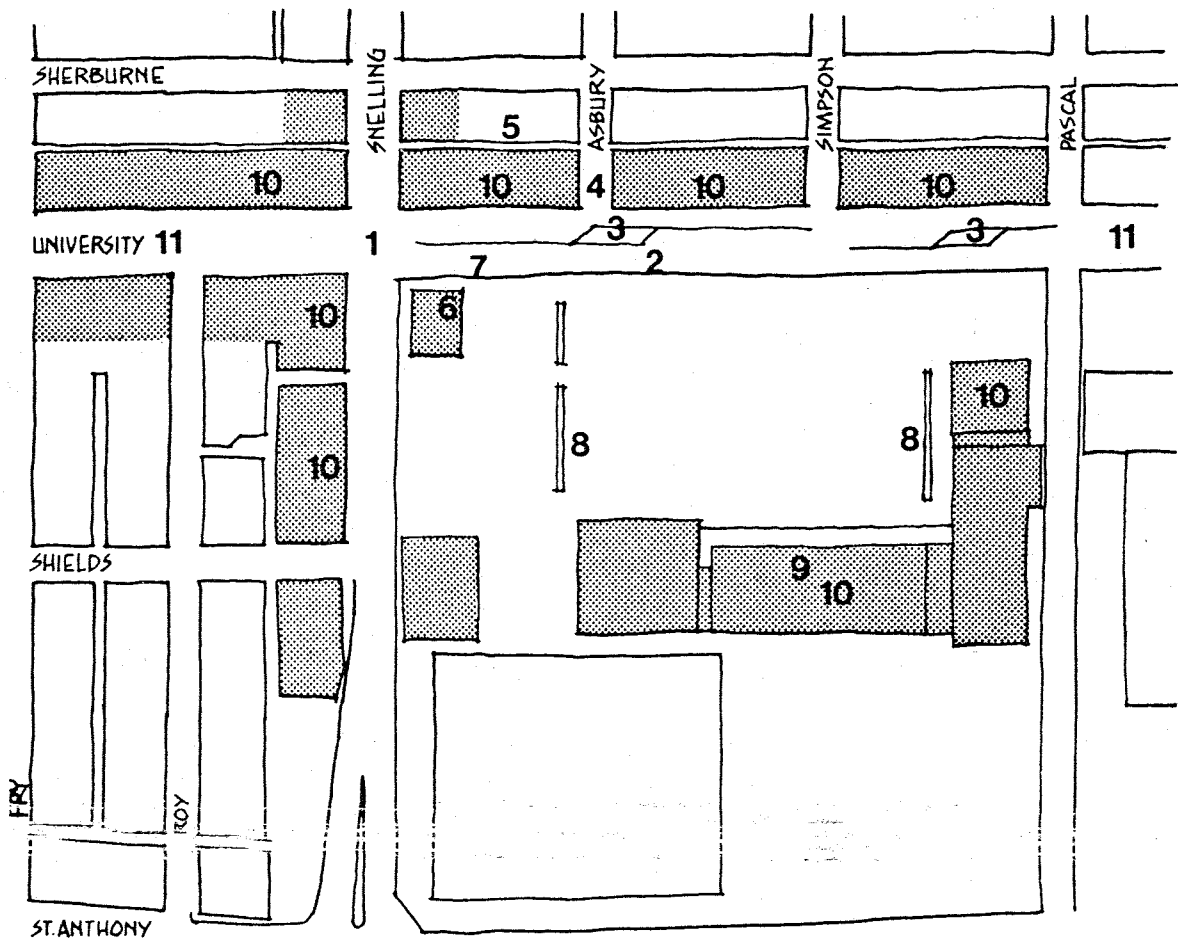


# Stage One Action Plan

The following organizational framework for implementation was drawn up to focus and monitor redevelopment and improvements for the University Avenue area. The Hamline-Midway Local Development Corporation was given the responsibility of implementing the Task Force recommendations:

**FOCUS:** The University Avenue Task Force, recognizing the problems and impact at and around the Snelling-University Avenue intersection, designates the intersection and the commercial properties along University from Fry Street to Pascal, and the properties on Snelling from Shields to Sherburne as the Stage 1 Focus Area.

**ORGANIZE:** The Local Development Corporation will work with the business community within the focus area to develop a design district with mutually agreed to sign controls and pedestrian improvements.



The Local Development Corporation will work with:

1. The Department of Public Works to incorporate pedestrian improvements at the Snelling-University intersection.
2. The Department of Public Works to redesign the sidewalk along the south side of University from Snelling to Pascal to widen the walkway and incorporate pedestrian improvement and plantings.
3. The Department of Public Works to determine where tree plantings can be placed within the median.
4. The Department of Public Works to study the redesign of Asbury between University and the alley to the north to increase the parking potential and increased landscaping.
5. The local business and the city to secure off-street parking for the business to the northeast of the Snelling-University intersection.
6. The Midway National Bank to encourage the new bank structure to incorporate a bus shelter.
7. The MTC and taxi companies to redesign the bus stop at the southeast corner of Snelling and University to provide space for two standing buses and a taxi stand.
8. The city and the owners of the Midway Center to incorporate vegetation along the right-of-way lanes within the Midway Center parking lot.
9. The local business owners of the Midway Center to encourage the enclosing of the promenade and creation of pedestrian walkways within the parking lot.
10. The participating businesses to develop a strong sign and design theme for the Snelling-University intersection.
11. The city and the Metro Council to study the feasibility of light rail transit for University Avenue.

## APPENDIX

The following section is made up of the four issue papers addressing transportation, land use, urban design and economic development. These papers were presented to the University Avenue Task Force to assist in identifying needs and opportunities and to stimulate discussion. That discussion led to the formulation of the proposals contained within this plan.

## TRANSPORTATION PAPER

### CURRENT PROBLEMS

1. There is a high volume of automobile traffic along University and Snelling Avenues.
2. The accident rates are high.
3. There is excessive air and noise pollution along University and Snelling Avenues.
4. There is no parking adjacent to the express bus pick-up area.
5. The Snelling-University intersection is hazardous for pedestrians.

### TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

The transportation issues affecting the University Avenue area result from the Avenue being a focus of the regional transportation network. The network is composed of local and collector streets, level A and B arterials, and intermediate and principal arterials. The University Avenue Study area is directly affected by each level of this system. The greatest impacts are caused by the principal arterial, I-94, and Snelling and University Avenues.

The manner in which the various levels interact produces the traffic conditions associated with the corridor. Typical of how this works is the following example: Of the approximately 97,000 vehicles per day traveling on Interstate 94, 23% (22,000 vehicles) exit onto Snelling Avenue. Another 13% (12,500 vehicles) exit onto Lexington Avenue, and 5.5% (5,500 vehicles) use the west-bound exit onto Hamline Avenue. Much of this traffic is then directed to University Avenue. A portion of this traffic will flow directly through the area; the remainder disseminating within the area. It is the combination of the flow-through and local traffic within the structure of the Avenue which produces the high volume and resultant conflicts experienced in the area.

As is evident from the previous example, the local traffic has two basic components. The first is comprised of traffic created by those individuals who either live, work, or shop in the area. This group is directly supportive of University Avenue, and is essential to the continuing activity there. The second portion is comprised of those who pass directly through the area, utilizing it as a means of reaching points dissociated with the Avenue itself.

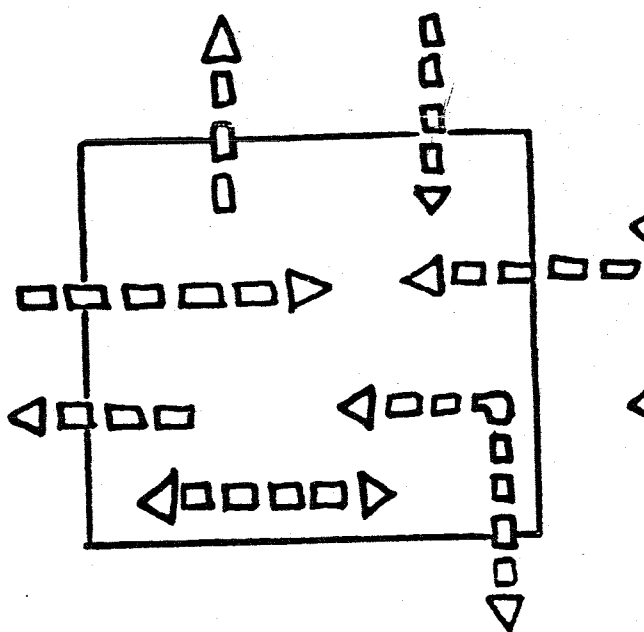


Figure 1: Local Traffic

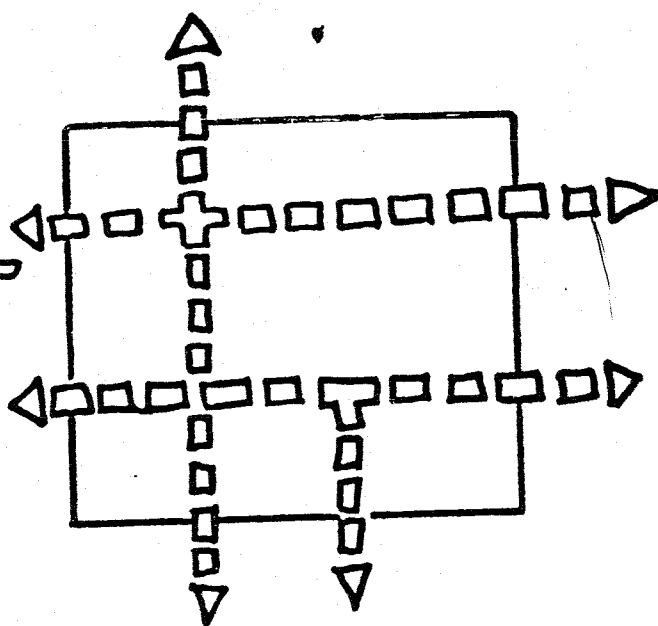


Figure 2: Through Traffic

Based on national averages for typical urban conditions derived from EPA Document AD 42, traffic can be broken down as follows:

Automobile and Light Truck	93.5%
Heavy Gasoline and Diesel Trucks	5 %
*Diesel Buses	1.5%

\*Based on typical number of units utilizing Route #16.

These vehicle counts suggest that the majority of volume related traffic problems are caused by passenger vehicles. Some of the more significant problems caused by high volumes in the area are as follows:

- Large number of accidents
- Difficult access at points
- Air pollution
- Parking conflicts
- Pedestrian circulation problems

There have traditionally been a considerable number of traffic accidents associated with University Avenue, especially notable at the Snelling Avenue intersection. Table 1 represents recent traffic accident counts, estimated volumes, and projected accident rates for the major intersections within the study area.



TABLE 1  
ACCIDENT RATES FOR CITY INTERSECTIONS

Intersection With University Avenue	Accidents in 1979	Daily Number of Vehicles Using Intersection	Yearly Accident Rate, Accidents Per 1,000 Vehicles
Snelling Avenue	57	53,769	1/344
Lexington	43	40,887	1/347
Pascal	29	26,062	1/328
Hamline	25	29,462	1/430
Fairview	22	26,037	1/432
Prior	17	23,687	1/508
Selby/Snelling	30	37,575	1/457
Como/Snelling	35	15,687	1/229
Rice/Arlington	26	17,887	1/251
Chestnut/Shepard Road	54	30,462	1/206
Snelling Ave. 1980	73	53,769	1/246
Snelling Ave. 1978	*78	53,769	1/251

\*Accident count for 1980 through November.

It is evident that there are a greater number of accidents than would be desired, however, the actual rate does not appear exceptional when compared with other major intersections. The University Avenue/Snelling Avenue intersection is the highest volume area in the City of St. Paul, and might be expected to have a proportionately higher rate. Also evident from the volume and flow maps is the fact that the higher volume streets approaching University Avenue are those with direct access to Interstate 94 across the freeway, or both. As a result, these streets may present an opportunity to better control traffic approaching the area.

Access to certain areas along the corridor could also be improved, particularly in the Snelling Avenue area. These are primarily caused by intersection and road design features necessitated by traffic conditions. If traffic can be managed more efficiently, the possibility of providing more convenient access may be possible.

The Snelling Avenue/University Avenue intersection has been cited by the Pollution Control Agency as a problem area in regards to carbon monoxide (CO) levels. Although the one hour ambient CO standard of 35 ppm has not been exceeded, the eight hour ambient standard of 9 ppm was exceeded 15 times in 1979, and 11 times through November of 1980. It should be noted that only CO levels have been monitored, that this is primarily emitted by gasoline combustion, and represents only one factor of the air quality in the area.

Another point of concern deals with the parking aspect of traffic. Many of the larger activity centers maintain parking lots of sufficient capacity to handle expected loads. Many of the smaller strip businesses, however, rely heavily on available on-street parking. In some cases, there are not enough convenient on-street spaces to utilize, and the vehicles tend to use residential streets or other lots which do not have the capacity to handle them. Refer to the parking map for locations of parking areas. Once parking has been achieved, the user then becomes a pedestrian and must deal with the conflicts associated with this mode of transportation within the area.

The pedestrian circulation within the study area has a number of problems due partially to the way in which it interacts with vehicular traffic, and partially to the Avenue being linear in nature. The basic pedestrian problems are as follows:

- Circulation between nodes within the corridor.
- Circulation within nodes.
- Circulation between the parking and business functions.
- Circulation conflicts with traffic, especially at intersections.
- Circulation/access between the Avenue and residential areas.

Pedestrian movement is an important factor in how well the activities of the Avenue function as a whole, and critical to specific areas within the corridor such as the shopping centers. Managing the pedestrian circulation may be one of the most crucial factors in improving the Avenue.

Closely related to the pedestrian system is the mass transit aspect of transportation. Users of the system are like highly mobile pedestrians in that they eliminate most of the vehicular concerns enroute, and are essentially pedestrians at both ends. The major issues for uses of mass transit are the same as for pedestrians with the addition of convenient scheduling and route selection.

The University Avenue route (#16) is one of the most used (27,000 ppd) and economically successful within the system.

Typical weekday flow utilizes 279 bus trips along University Avenue between the downtown areas of St. Paul and Minneapolis. About half of this is between city centers, and half to points between. Although the system functions quite well and can adapt quite readily to different demands, there are several possible changes which might provide improvements. These include:

- Larger, more efficient buses.
- More bus shelters.
- Stop changes (more "far side" stops).
- Opticom priority system.

In addition to or in place of existing bus routes along University Avenue, a system of Light Rail Transit (LRT) is currently under consideration by the Metropolitan Council. An analysis of this corridor will be finalized in early February of this year.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

As part of the requirement to develop a Comprehensive Plan, the city has developed a citywide Streets and Highways Plan, and a Transit Plan. The following policies from these plans have a direct applicability to the University Avenue Study area.

#### Express Transit Development

The City of St. Paul considers LRT a significant transit alternative. Subject to Metropolitan Council's LRT study findings, this mode of express transit should be pursued. If it is determined to be feasible in the Twin Cities, the University Avenue route proposal should be seriously considered. Also, the city, the MTC, and the Metropolitan Council should study the interrelationships between potential LRT and bus service.

Special provisions should be made to improve bus speeds in traffic to provide the rider incentive of shorter travel time.

#### Transit Service to Clusters

The city and the MTC should investigate the locations most suitable for transit centers to serve as multiple route transfer points. These centers should coincide with significant land use clusters. Moreover, transit amenities and convenient pedestrian circulation and access should be major design features of these clusters and centers. The Transit Plan also calls for the city to revise the zoning ordinance to require transit related amenities and improvements to be part of major new residential developments and employment generators in the major opportunity areas identified in the Land Use Plan.

#### Street and Highway Development

Vehicular travel should be concentrated on major streets and highways to protect the residential environment. These major routes should also serve as buffers between different types of land uses wherever possible. Streets and highways also serve the function of shaping land use patterns.

## DISTRICT POLICIES

The following policies from the District Plans have a direct applicability to the University Avenue Study area.

### District 11 Plan

- . Through traffic should be confined to relatively few streets.
- . Local residential streets should be improved so as to minimize through traffic and to enhance the quality of the residential neighborhoods.

### District 13 Plan

- . Through traffic should be discouraged from using local streets.
- . Nuisance-causing parking should be eliminated on residential streets.
- . Safe bikeways should be designated and built along Lexington Avenue to Como Park.

## GOALS

1. To improve transit quality and service.
2. To study the potential for light rail transit along University Avenue.
3. To develop street design and engineering which provides quick access through the Snelling-University intersection.
4. To encourage transportation systems which provide adequate mobility while conserving energy and not polluting the environment.
5. To keep through traffic on major streets.
6. To provide ease of access to the Midway Shopping area without aggravating the Snelling-University pollution problem.
7. To minimize pedestrian-vehicular circulation conflict.
8. To improve the efficiency of commercial parking.
9. To research innovative parking methods and design.
10. To maximize the interconnection between the Midway Center and other commercial functions within the study area.

## LAND USE PAPER

### CURRENT PROBLEMS

1. The commercial strip is in need of physical improvements.
2. Many area businesses need more customer parking.
3. There are industrial firms in need of contiguous expansion space.
4. There are vacant and underutilized land and buildings throughout the study area.
5. There is the need for buffering between commercial/industrial areas and residential neighborhoods.
6. The air pollution level at Snelling and University exceeds the federal standards.
7. Iris Park has deteriorated and poses a danger to small children playing in the park.

### LAND USE PATTERNS

The University Avenue Study area has numerous land use conflicts that result from grouping industrial, commercial, and residential uses into a relatively small area. This paper will identify some of these problems and suggest goals that are consistent with the District 11 and District 13 Plans and the Land Use component of the St. Paul Comprehensive Plan.

The University Avenue Study area is basically defined by Thomas Avenue to the north, I-94 to the south, Lexington Avenue to the east and Cleveland Avenue to the west. The retail and office uses are located along University Avenue, Snelling Avenue and within the Midway Shopping Center. These businesses are zoned B-2 and B-3, designating business districts of varied commercial uses.

The industrial uses, located primarily in the west/north-west sections of the study area, are zoned I-1 or I-2. The I-1 classification allows wholesale, warehouse, and light industrial uses. The I-2 zoned area located exclusively north of University and west of Prior, allows heavy industrial uses.

There are two major residential neighborhoods within the study area. The residential blocks north of University Avenue to Thomas Avenue are predominantly zoned R-4, a single family residential zone. The residential neighborhood bounded by I-94, Cleveland, University, and Snelling Avenues, is zoned RM-2 allowing medium density, low-rise housing.

The study area contains approximately 2,670,000 square feet of commercial building space. Of this square footage, 38% is used for retail sales, 13% for office use, 42% for industrial, warehouse, transportation uses, and 3% for institutional use. The remaining 4% is vacant. Of the existing retail and office uses approximately 7% is vacant. The percentage of retail sales space will increase dramatically with the opening of the Target store at University and Hamline in 1982.



## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### LAND USE POLICIES

As part of the requirement to develop a Comprehensive Plan, the City Council has adopted a Citywide Land Use Plan. The following policies from the Land Use Plan have a direct applicability to the University Avenue Study area.

#### Clustering

The city will promote the clustering of compatible mixed land uses as a major strategy to meet land use demands over the coming decade. Higher density housing developments will be encouraged in designated clusters. The Midway Center has been designated as a "Major Retail Center". The area around the University-Lexington intersection has been designated as a "Neighborhood Level Cluster". The Planned Unit Development will be used as a major tool in these cluster areas.

#### Commercial Development

The city will support diverse commercial activity by working with business and community groups. The development of compatible mixed uses along commercial strips will be encouraged.

#### Industrial Development

The city will work with industrial property owners on re-use plans for obsolete structures, and will encourage such uses as incubator space for new firms.

The city will work to develop zoning performance standards aimed at a wider range of options in light industry location choices. This includes flexibility in industrial groupings and mixing with commercial and residential uses where appropriate.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### DISTRICT POLICIES

The following policies from the District Plans have a direct applicability to the University Avenue Study area.

## District 11 Plan

### University Avenue Redevelopment Proposal

The District 11 Coalition believes that the district has more to lose than to gain by allowing business expansion onto Sherburne Avenue. The Coalition recognizes that businesses have a problem with providing off-street parking, but the solution must not be at the expense of the residential community. Because many of the parking lots which have been built in residential areas in the district have been eyesores and nuisances, the Coalition recommends that new parking lots be built along University Avenue, in the gaps between buildings.

### Industrial Development Coordination

The Economic Development Committee of the Coalition will institute a system to assist business and government, principally the Port Authority, with the expansion or relocation of existing firms and with the development of vacant lands and buildings.

## District 13 Plan

### Midway Area

The city should undertake a special district-level economic development plan for the Midway commercial and industrial area.

## GOALS

1. To promote land usage which is in harmony with the surrounding land uses.
2. To increase land use opportunities by clustering (transit-related) compatible activities.
3. To support Planned Unit Development (PUD) and other forms of innovative development which facilitates the City's Land Use Plan concept of clustering.
4. To encourage the development of higher density housing within the designated mixed use cluster.
5. To develop long-range plans for land use that would incorporate innovative transit systems such as light rail.
6. To relate land use development to infrastructure elements such as transportation systems, sewers, etc., and the possible future installation of district heating.
7. To recommend appropriate reuses for vacant and underutilized land within the study area.
8. To support changes in land use if the existing use is inappropriate.

9. To develop plans for the long range maintenance of land use improvements.
10. To maintain and improve the quality of the residential neighborhoods.
11. To reduce the problems with boundary conflicts between residential and commercial/industrial uses.
12. To develop recommendations which build upon the strengths of existing features such as the study areas central location between the St. Paul and Minneapolis central business districts.

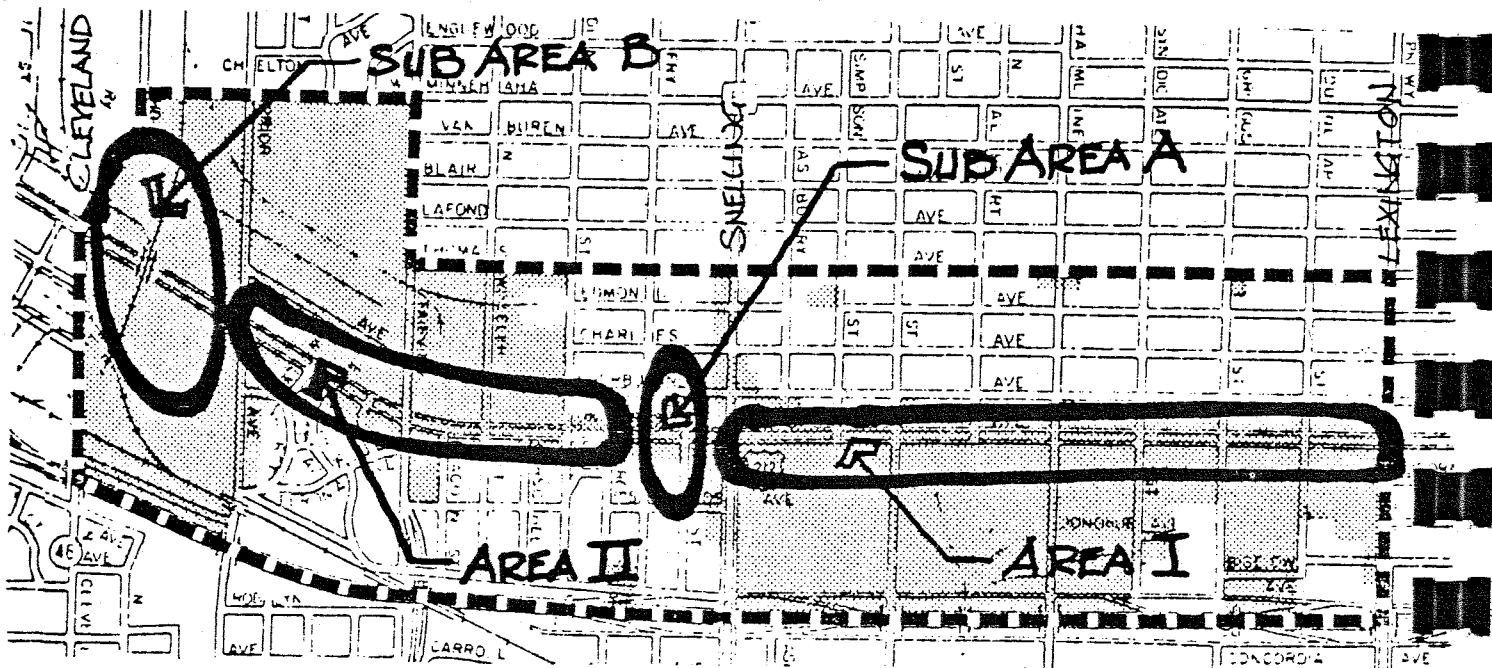
## URBAN DESIGN PAPER

### CURRENT PROBLEMS

1. Several sections of University Avenue are underdeveloped and devoted to auto storage.
2. The area lacks unifying elements except for the Avenue itself.
3. There is excessive and poorly located signage.
4. There is too much paving and too little landscaping along the Avenue.
5. There are too few bus shelters and the bus stops are not clearly visible or attractive.

### URBAN DESIGN ISSUES

The section of University Ave. from Lexington to Cleveland can be divided into 2 areas with an identifiable character.



Area I can be described as an intense commercial area, consisting of generally large scale businesses (i.e. Ward's, car dealers, Midway Center, etc.) The buildings and open spaces tend to be much larger than the western end of the study area. Also, the orientation seems more heavily weighted toward vehicular traffic.

SUB AREA A, to the west of AREA I, is a transitional strip of about 2 blocks in which the scale of the buildings and open spaces diminish in size. The businesses are not as large. Vehicular traffic is slightly reduced.

AREA II differs from AREA I in the mixture of uses, the scale of the buildings, the type of open spaces, and the volume of traffic. In this Section there is a mixture of institutional, office, and residential in addition to the commercial activities in AREA I. There is a variety of smaller buildings that tend to be more compactly organized than in AREA I.

Some of the open spaces are landscaped instead of paved, providing a little relief for the pedestrian. The traffic volume is less but has a larger proportion of trucks because of the proximity to the industrial areas.

#### SUB AREA B

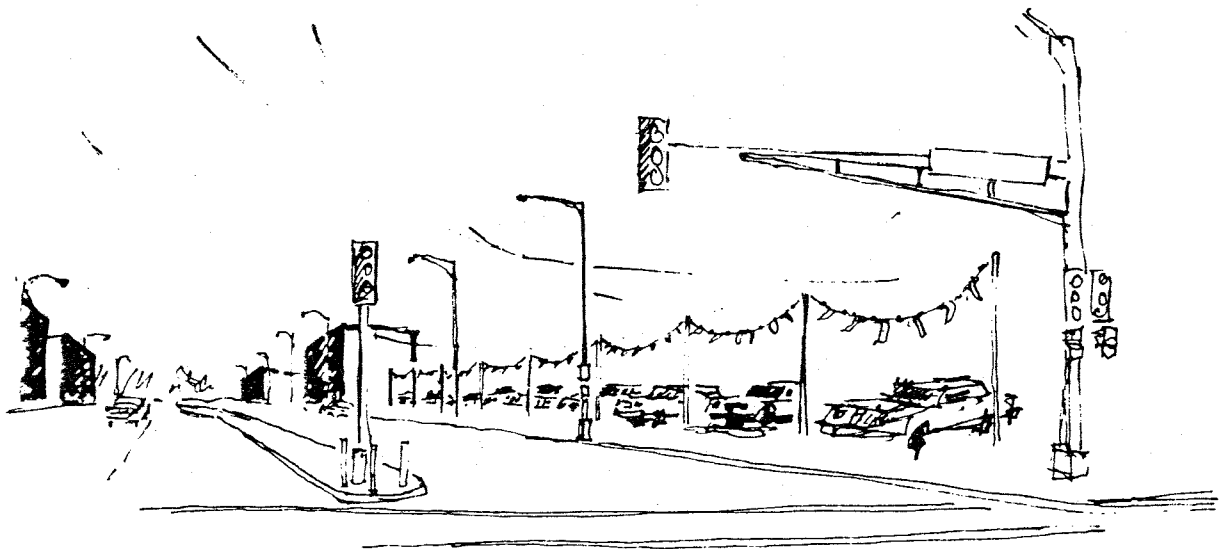
Again, there is a short strip from Prior to Cleveland that is a transition to the industrial area to the west. This is characterized by a grade change. A dwindling number of businesses, and large open spaces.

#### ENTRY EXPERIENCE

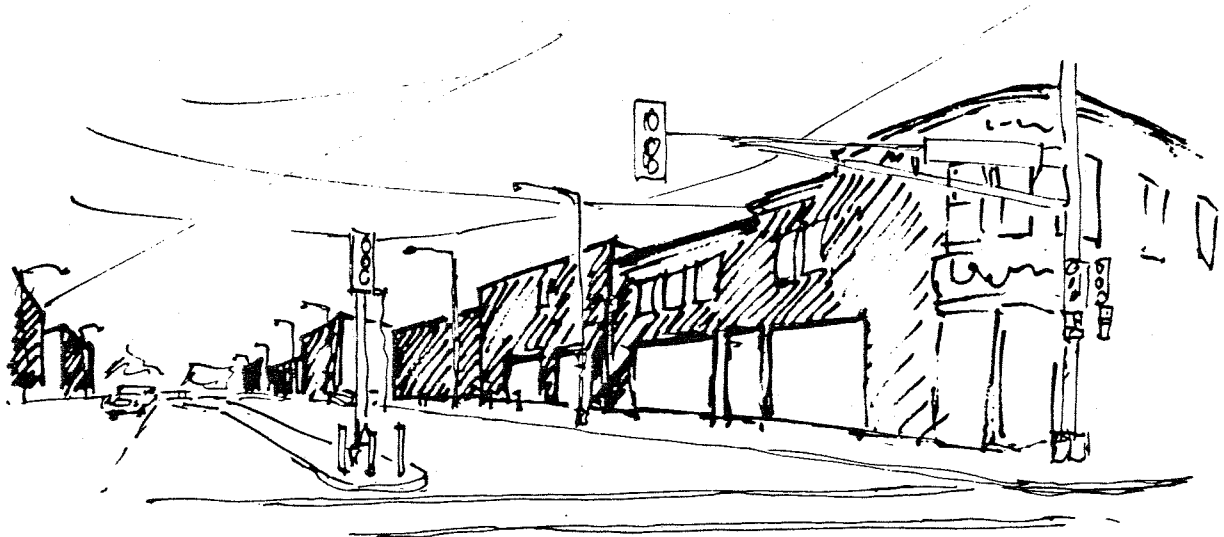
Not much happens on the Avenue to distinguish it as a place; no cohesive elements to tie it together. The strip dissipates into the empty spaces and the profusion of clutter. The only significant entry is, coming from the west under the railroad bridge west of Cleveland. This problem is usually addressed when the area develops a coherent form.

## ARCHITECTURAL UNITY

The large scale of University Ave. requires large scale elements to unify it. Such things as buildings and street planting can provide this unity. Presently there is no significant street planting, and the buildings are separated by too many large spaces or set back from each other to be an effective force. If the buildings were visually tied together they could exert a strong influence on the visual organization of the strip. Without a large unifying element, the smaller elements like signs, light poles, cars, banners, etc. give the strongest impression, which is confusion.



*Ununified streetscape*



*Street unified by building massing*

## PARKING

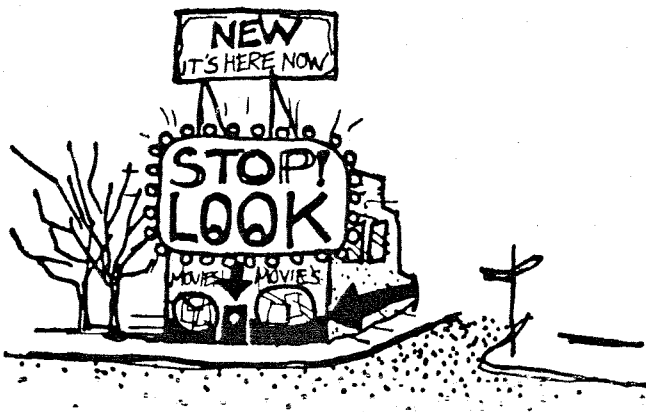
Parking is the most sensitive issue. It can hold the key to help solving some of the other problems which are in part caused by vehicular storage. The storage of vehicles uses up valuable property that might otherwise provide opportunities for more businesses. The existing parking lots create holes in the street facade, weakening the effect of enclosure that the buildings would normally provide.

Just seeing the vehicles adds to the clutter and visual disunity. Certainly better screening could alleviate some of the unsightliness. A perverse side effect of the car is that although it is convenient to get to somewhere with it, once one parks it and tries to walk to the store or whatever, the cars make it difficult to make the final steps; often there are no sidewalks in parking lots. It is often hazardous to walk along with moving cars. The exhaust fumes and noise make walking unpleasant. The parking issue seems to be a major contributor to making the area unpleasant to look at and difficult to move around in.

## SIGNAGE

A profusion of signs further adds to the confusion along University Ave. The rampant misuse of signs benefits no one. The signs presently do little as advertising, but do a great deal to clutter the Avenue. Signs should be

1. Concise
2. Easy to read
3. Located for intended viewer, i.e. pedestrians or vehicles
4. Sympathetic to Building Design



Extremely large signs should be avoided (i.e. billboards, signs painted on sides of buildings, etc.) The important idea about signage is that each sign should match its intended use.

## PEDESTRIANS

People on foot are often out of place on University Ave. The scale of the spaces, uninviting store fronts, confusing signs, hazard from vehicles, and general disregard for the pedestrian make walking along University undesirable.

1. The places provided for pedestrians are not separated from the vehicular corridors.
2. There are few elements to break the space down into digestible bites. Instead, the person on foot is lost in an overwhelming landscape.
3. Many store fronts have closed up or cut down their windows, which provides an uninviting backdrop for the pedestrian. Indeed, the person walking is probably oblivious to these stores, since he has no idea of what is going on inside.
4. The signage as a rule is too high up on the building, too big or confused with a jumble of other signs. Some signage should be geared for a person walking by.
5. The sidewalks are framed by street parking on one side and parking lots on the other with no attempt made to buffer the pedestrians.
6. Intersections and drives are also a problem area.

All of the symbolism reinforces the auto's supremacy, leaving the pedestrian cautiously dodging between the autos in the left over spaces. Perhaps this situation not only deters people walking into the area, but also from getting out of their cars. Might a pleasant pedestrian environment make people more readily accept walking further from their cars?

## COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL INTERACTION

The problems related to the back to back relationship of the commercial and residential seem to center around the auto.

1. Pressure for space to park cars has resulted in on-street residential parking being used by adjacent businesses.
2. Some residential lots have been converted into parking lots which erode the residential environment.
3. Also, because of the neglected pedestrian emphasis on University, even the adjacent community is encouraged to drive into the University Ave. strip.



4. In many cases the rear views of commercial property is unsightly to the adjacent residential.
5. This shabbiness is compounded by poorly maintained alleys, and unattractive power and telephone lines.

#### BUILDING CONDITION

The poor condition or poor adaptation of some of the buildings along University Ave. contribute to a shabby image. An image of a declining commercial strip.

#### PSYCHOLOGY

The combined effect of the physical problems on University produce a depressed, inferior attitude. The idea of a declining business district keeps new businesses away and makes revitalization impossible.

#### GOALS

1. To create landmarks or strengthen symbols that develop focus and positive image.
2. To create visual interest along University Avenue with contrast, foci, reliefs, etc.
3. To encourage both private and public landscaping to provide visual differentiation and relief.
4. To encourage the elimination of visual noise.
5. To develop buffers between incompatible land uses.
6. To visually improve the existing parks and open space along University Avenue.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PAPER

### CURRENT PROBLEMS

1. Some buildings need better maintenance and possibly rehabilitation in order to make them attractive and functional.
2. Some commercial sites have very narrow lot depths, creating problems for parking and loading.
3. The heavy volume of traffic through the commercial area hinders business.
4. Competition from shopping centers outside of the University Avenue area has drawn customers away from local businesses.
5. In some business areas, there is poor mixture of commercial uses, and there are some industrial uses in commercial areas.
6. There is a lack of family entertainment in the area, such as a movie theatre.

### BUSINESS SURVEY

A survey was conducted by Business Revitalization Division to investigate area businesses' needs and problems as well as the concerns of the area as a whole. The information gathered by the survey has aided the Business Revitalization Division (BRD) in the disbursement of low-interest improvement loans and it will better acquaint the BRD with the needs and concerns of the businesses within the study area.

The information was used by the University Avenue Task Force in their discussions on improving various conditions within the study area. The views of the area businesses were a valuable source of insight for the task force members as they developed proposals in the areas of transportation, land use, urban design and economic development.

The study area contains a wide variety of businesses engaged in manufacturing, wholesale, retail sales and service oriented activities. Obviously each of these segments of the business community will have special needs but some general trends may be observed.

A typical business within the area may look like this: The business would be leasing their building and would be run as a corporation. The business would be engaged in retail sales and would be open during daytime hours. The majority of its' customers would be from the immediate neighborhood extending out gradually to include the entire Twin City area.

Business would be increasing gradually with enough capital to consider revitalizing or expanding. As long as it continues to make economic sense our hypothetical business would consider taking out low-interest loans to improve the business. This money would likely be spent renovating the building exterior and attempting to improve the parking problem.

Our business person does not perceive crime to be a major problem in the area, but vandalism is a potential problem. Police protection is felt to be adequate to support our businessperson when it is necessary to call upon their services regarding crime and the general security of the area. Of the possible pollution problems, litter is thought of as the major problem by the businesspersons.

Transportation is not seen as a problem for our businessperson as long as the customers know where to find a parking spot. Parking is an important issue that must be addressed whenever discussing expansion, revitalization, or new development within the study area.

### COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The following are the economic policies of the Comprehensive Plan that have particular importance to University Avenue.

1. The city will base it's neighborhood commercial development efforts on a recognition of the interdependence between neighborhood commercial areas and the adjacent residential communities.
2. The city will develop a clear understanding of the role played by University Avenue, a major retail center, and encourage complimentary development in the area while discouraging development that would be in direct competition.
3. The city will continue to emphasize its joint public-private comprehensive revitalization program.
4. The city will continue to target its aid for neighborhood commercial revitalization to the most appropriate areas.
5. The city will continue to give priority to assist the retention and expansion of existing small commercial firms within the city.
6. The city will continue to encourage new commercial developments in neighborhood commercial areas, and will establish specific assistance criteria to decide which development efforts to assist.

### COMPREHENSIVE POLICY

#### DISTRICT POLICIES

The following policies from the District Plans have a direct applicability to the University Avenue Study Area.

#### DISTRICT 11 PLAN

1. Improve the functioning and aesthetics of the Snelling Avenue and University Avenue commercial areas.
2. Cluster businesses which will enhance one another, because the businesses facilitate either convenient one stop shopping, or comparison shopping among businesses offering the same kind of goods.

3. Architects and planners have recommended an approach to guide the growth and revitalization of the Snelling Avenue commercial area. Businesses along Snelling Avenue between University and Thomas Avenues should be made up of businesses whose customers come from the entire city or are other businesses. This area should continue to provide printing shops, refrigeration shops, funeral homes, fast food restaurants, wholesale bakeries and wholesale meats.
4. After district debates had been concluded, the Coalition Board chose as a method of development along University Avenue, that of business containment. According to this plan, all business use is confined to lots which front on University Avenue. Neither business buildings nor parking lots are permitted on Sherburne Avenue. All or most car dealers should move to the suburbs, and some business buildings should be removed for off-street parking. The coalition and city should work with the building owners to find compatible reuses of vacant buildings.
5. There are many employment opportunities and potential employers in the area. The economic committee will assist other local committees in finding jobs for those who need them.

#### GOALS

1. To encourage small businesses, especially those that would service the surrounding residential neighborhood.
2. To develop design controls for strip commercial.
3. To provide assistance to secure business loans and improvements.
4. To develop a long-range economic plan based on improved transit systems.

## CREDITS

The University Avenue Plan Draft was produced by the University Avenue Task Force and city staff:

### UNIVERSITY AVENUE TASK FORCE:

Calvin deRuyter, Chairperson  
Don Putnam, Co-Chairperson  
Graham Butler  
Lana Cheatham  
Glen Ellenwood  
Dennis Grogan  
Dick Gunderson  
Kate Harrigan  
Ralph Holcomb  
Esther Johnson  
Robert Mishek  
Rick Parranto  
June Rustad  
Richard Smith  
Tom Stieger  
Otto Wallender  
Bob Wicker

### ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY DIRECTION:

James J. Bellus, AICP, Director, PED  
Peggy A. Reichert, Deputy Director, PED

### RESEARCH AND PLANNING:

James S. Zdon, Principal Planner  
Thomas Zahn, Planner-in-Charge